

The picture is somewhat different if one includes into this consideration the continuous efforts made during the initial years of the depression to continue public construction activity despite, or because of, the decline of private building. Total construction volume in the United States was maintained or kept from falling further 1930 and 1931 through the volume of public construction (see table 1). Not all that was the result of unemployment considerations, but some of it probably was. 1932, however, overall volume sharply declined. Although public construction did decrease less precipitately than private construction, as is indicated by the percentage rise, the difference in reduction was patently insufficient to check economic disaster. The Public Works Administration created during the New Deal under Title I of the National Industrial Recovery Act disposed of approximately \$2.2 billion for public construction purposes.⁵⁹ In comparison, the endeavors to use public works in the fight against unemployment made by the federal government and the various states before the advent of Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration can therefore merely be characterized as seminal.

During the last weeks of the Hoover administration a Roosevelt man observed that in this matter of promoting public works in order to increase employment there was no national and local effort to coordinate and study the scheme." The reproachful tone of that remark is understandable and, in view of the accomplishments of the New Deal, perhaps not entirely unjustified. But it has also to be kept in mind that the corresponding insight could only be gained, or at least confirmed, through the experience of the preceding years and decades. The way from the era that stressed individualism, self-reliance, and "sound" business principles to the time that accepted the idea that governmental intervention could be a good thing and that budget balancing could constitute a "fundamental folly" in an economic crisis was long and not at all necessarily clear and obvious throughout.⁶⁰ The American public had first to learn that workers could lose their jobs in an industrial society through no fault of their own and that it was the public's task to look after them. Meeting that obligation necessarily involved an expansion of governmental power, both administrative and financial. Such a development occurred during World War I, but because it was clearly understood to be a temporary experience, a conscious effort was made after the end of the hostilities to dismantle much of the apparatus created for the emergency. Claiming that unemployment constituted an emergency equal to war seemed to question the traditional "American way of life." The economic downturns of 1914-1915 and 1921 did not last long enough to upset the fundamentals of that belief, and it took the Great Depression to bring the point home.

⁵⁹ Association, *Proceedings*, 39 (March 1934), 84; Paul Webbink, "Unemployment in the United States, 1930-40," *American Economic Review, Papers and Proceedings*, 30 (Feb. 1941), 259.

⁶⁰ This sum excludes projects apart from the regular public works program of construction. Gayet, *Public Works*, 1-95.

⁶¹ Robert D. Kohn, "Memorandum Prepared at the suggestion of the 'Group' at the Meeting of January 13th," Jan. 13, 1933, microfilm, reel 66, Andrews Papers; "How Sound Is This Clamor for Salvation by Budget-Balancing?" *American City*, 46 (June 1932), 5.

November Elections: The Cuban Missile Crisis and American Politics, 1962

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Thomas G. Paterson and William J. Brophy

"I told you that the President would move on Cuba before [the] election," Sen. Norris Cotton of New Hampshire reminded his constituents a week after President John F. Kennedy had dramatically announced that the United States was imposing a quarantine against Cuba to force Soviet missiles from the Caribbean island. Another Republican standing for reelection in 1962, Rep. Thomas B. Curtis of Missouri, told voters in his district that the Cuban missile crisis was "phony and contrived for election purposes." Republican Sen. Barry Goldwater of Arizona, like many others, suspected that the Kennedy administration had played politics with foreign policy to help Democrats in the congressional elections of November 6.¹

The claim — and fear — that presidents play politics with foreign policy, especially in electoral seasons, is familiar and often well founded. Throughout American history, suspicions have flourished that presidents take unusual and sometimes extreme diplomatic or military steps, utter hyperboles, practice deceit, or manufacture foreign crises to improve their own and their party's chances at the polls. Like political leaders before him, Kennedy had invited imputations that he exploited foreign-policy issues for political gain or that he made diplomatic decisions in response to domestic political pressure. Indeed, about a month before the missile crisis, Kennedy had made a conspicuous political decision in foreign affairs: to sell Hawk missiles to Israel. American Jews had lobbied intensely for the sale; some of them had even withheld contributions from congressional candidates until they saw Kennedy act on the deal. The sale of those short-range missiles, the administration

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¹ Press Release, Oct. 30, 1962, Norris Cotton Papers (University of New Hampshire Library, Durham); Thomas B. Curtis to Thomas G. Paterson, Jan. 6, 1984 (in Paterson's possession); *New York Times*, Oct. 23, 1962, pp. 1, 8; *ibid.*, Oct. 24, 1962, p. 16; *ibid.*, Oct. 27, 1962, p. 7; *ibid.*, Sept. 10, 1964, p. 17. See also F. Clifton White, *Suite 3505: The Story of the Draft Goldwater Movement* (New Rochelle, 1967), 82; and Frank S. Meyer, "The 1962 Elections: The Turning of the Tide," *National Review*, Dec. 4, 1962, p. 434. Many congressional manuscript collections contain letters from constituents who charged John F. Kennedy with political gamesmanship in his handling of the missile crisis. See, for example, the letters in box 145, Milton R. Young Papers (University of North Dakota Library, Grand Forks).

explained at the time, was designed to balance Communist weapons shipments to Egypt, Iraq, and Syria. But "the reason it was done was politics," the United States ambassador to Egypt, John S. Badeau, later concluded.²

Politics certainly preoccupied Kennedy in the fall of 1962. The president and his aides eagerly looked to the forthcoming elections to produce a more sympathetic Congress. To be sure, the Democrats controlled the Senate 65-35 and the House of Representatives 263-174. Yet the Democratic administration could never count on a working majority for its domestic proposals. House committees were chaired by conservative southerners; and in the Senate, Republicans and southern Democrats often teamed up to thwart Kennedy's requests. Medicare failed by a 52-48 vote; the farm bill lost by five votes in the House. In 1961 only 48.4 percent of Kennedy's legislative initiatives gained approval; in 1962, 44.6 percent. Democratic gains or the prevention of losses in the 1962 elections, then, promised to ease or at least not to aggravate Kennedy's struggle with Congress. Even more, Sen. J. William Fulbright (Democrat from Arkansas) privately remarked: "If he doesn't get them [Congress] in hand and cooperating, his regime will be a failure."³

Some historians and political scientists have also thought that the president was driven in the Cuban missile crisis as much by political motives as by considerations of national security or prestige. James A. Nathan, Barton J. Bernstein, and others have suggested that Kennedy boldly confronted the Soviets and initially eschewed quiet diplomacy to resolve the conflict because a forthright, public display of toughness would disarm Republicans who had been lambasting the administration over Cuba and would improve Democratic chances in the congressional elections and because private talks could not be kept secret—leaks would be inevitable and politically damaging to the administration. Kennedy partisans such as Theodore C. Sorensen and Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., in contrast, have downplayed or discounted politics in their accounts of presidential decision making during the crisis. But even they have noted a linkage between the election results and the crisis. Another Kennedy appointee, Roger Hilsman of the Department of State, has been frank in recalling that "behind the policy choices loomed domestic politics." Indeed, "the United States might not [have been] in mortal danger but the administration most certainly was." But Hilsman's memoir nonetheless stressed questions of strategy and international prestige over domestic politics, and he later explained that by "domestic politics" he meant, not the forthcoming elections specifically, but general bureaucratic politics within the administration and relations with Congress. Other

² John S. Badeau, *The Middle East Remembered* (Washington, 1983), 176; *New York Times*, Sept. 27, 1962, pp. 1, 3. For other arguments that Kennedy made key decisions in part to avoid or deflect Republican criticism, see Stephen Pelz, "John F. Kennedy's 1961 Vietnam War Decisions," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 4 (Dec. 1981), 6-85; and Lucien S. Vandenbroucke, "Anatomy of a Failure: The Decision to Land at the Bay of Pigs," *Political Science Quarterly*, 99 (Fall 1984), 484-85. For Richard M. Nixon's charge that Kennedy exploited the Cuban issue for political gain in 1960, see Richard M. Nixon, *Six Crises* (New York, 1968), 379-84; and Kent M. Beck, "Necessary Lies, Hidden Truths: Cuba in the 1960 Campaign," *Diplomatic History*, 8 (Winter 1984), 37-59.

³ Lewis J. Paper, *John F. Kennedy: The Promise and the Performance* (New York, 1979), 275; Theodore C. Sorensen, *Kennedy* (New York, 1965), 339-49; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston, 1965), 708-709; Herbert Matthews, Memorandum of Conversation with J. William Fulbright, July 3, 1962, box 27, Herbert Matthews Papers (Butler Library, Columbia University, New York, NY).

writers have found a coincidence between the crisis and the congressional elections, but they have not investigated the relationship. Soviet works on the subject have found Kennedy's behavior rooted in United States intentions to crush the Cuban Revolution, not in American politics.⁴

Scholars cannot now be definitive about the relationship between politics and the Cuban missile crisis. Some documents remain unavailable to researchers, and participants kept no records of some conversations during the crisis.⁵ Presidents, moreover, necessarily make decisions that derive from a complex mix of private thoughts and public pressures that the historian cannot easily disentangle. And American voters are usually influenced by many issues—some personal, some local, some national, some international. Still, by posing precise questions and by applying extensive and heretofore largely unexplored research materials, scholars can refine the problem. We address it here with five sets of questions, organized chronologically.

First, how important was the Cuban issue to Republicans, Democrats, and the Kennedy administration in the fall of 1962 before October 16, the day the president

⁴ James A. Nathan, "The Missile Crisis: His Finest Hour Now," *World Politics*, 27 (Jan. 1975), 262-65; Barton J. Bernstein, "The Cuban Missile Crisis," in *Reflections on the Cold War: A Quarter Century of American Foreign Policy*, ed. Lynn H. Miller and Ronald Pruessen (Philadelphia, 1974), 131-33; Barton J. Bernstein, "Was the Cuban Missile Crisis Necessary?" *Washington Post*, Oct. 26, 1975, p. D1; Barton J. Bernstein, "The Week We Almost Went to War," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 32 (Feb. 1976), 17; Barton J. Bernstein, "The Cuban Missile Crisis: Trading the Jupiters in Turkey?" *Political Science Quarterly*, 95 (Spring 1980), 124; Ronald Steel, "Endgame," *New York Review of Books*, March 13, 1969, p. 15; I. F. Stone, "The Brink," *ibid.*, April 14, 1966, pp. 13-14; Richard J. Walton, *Cold War and Counterrevolution: The Foreign Policy of John F. Kennedy* (New York, 1972), 103-104, 130; Louise FitzSimons, *The Kennedy Doctrine* (New York, 1972), 169-72; Fen Osler Hampson, "The Divided Decision-Maker: American Domestic Politics and the Cuban Crisis," *International Security*, 9 (Winter 1984-85), 130-65. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., wrote that "it is hard to estimate the impact of the Cuba week on the election, though foreign crisis usually strengthens the administration in office." Schlesinger, *Thousand Days*, 794-833, esp. 832-33. Theodore C. Sorensen commented that the Democrats did well in 1962 through hard work "aided to an undeterminable extent by [Kennedy's] handling of the crisis." Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 354, 667-722. See also Theodore C. Sorensen, *The Kennedy Legacy* (New York, 1969), 187-91; Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *Robert Kennedy and His Times* (Boston, 1978), 512-13, 517, 530; Kenneth P. O'Donnell and David F. Powers with Joe McCarthy, "Johnny We Hardly Knew Ye": *Memoirs of John Fitzgerald Kennedy* (Boston, 1972), 307-43; and Henry M. Pachter, *Collision Course: The Cuban Missile Crisis and Coexistence* (New York, 1963), 18-20. For Roger Hilsman's perspective, see Roger Hilsman, *To Move a Nation: The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy* (Garden City, 1967), 176, 196-97; and Roger Hilsman and Ronald Steel, "An Exchange of Views," *New York Review of Books*, May 8, 1969, pp. 36-38. Other writers' accounts include, for example, Herbert S. Dinerstein, *The Making of a Missile Crisis: October 1962* (Baltimore, 1976), 185-90; Graham T. Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston, 1971), 187-89; David Dezer, *The Brink: The Story of the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1962* (New York, 1979); Herbert S. Parmet, *JFK: The Presidency of John F. Kennedy* (New York, 1983), 277-300; Richard N. Lebow, "The Cuban Missile Crisis: Reading the Lessons Correctly," *Political Science Quarterly*, 98 (Fall 1983), 443-45; Elie Abel, *The Missile Crisis* (Philadelphia, 1966), 56-57, 78; and Marc Trachtenberg, "The Influence of Nuclear Weapons in the Cuban Missile Crisis," *International Security*, 10 (Summer 1985), 162. For Soviet views, see Anatolii A. Gromyko, "The Caribbean Crisis," *Soviet Law and Government*, 11 (1972), 3-53; Anatolii A. Gromyko, *Through Russian Eyes: President Kennedy's 1036 Days* (Washington, 1973), 168-81; and Ronald R. Pope, ed., *Soviet Views on the Cuban Missile Crisis: Myth and Reality in Foreign Policy Analysis* (Washington, 1982).

⁵ For example, there seem to be no records of several conversations Robert F. Kennedy and the president held between meetings as they walked, stood on the balcony, or swam together in the White House swimming pool. President Kennedy's National Security Council Executive Committee (ExCom) also held "informal meetings" for which there appear to be no records. W. W. Rostow, "Participation in Cuban Missile Crisis Meetings, October 1962," Memorandum for the President, Oct. 5, 1968, Office Files of the President, Lyndon B. Johnson Papers (Lyndon B. Johnson Library, Austin, Texas). As well, at this writing, many documents remain security classified, closed by donor's request, or unprocessed: Robert F. Kennedy's Security Classified File; some summaries of National Security Council and ExCom meetings; transcripts of tapes for meetings of October 18 and 22.

IN PREP TO ALTERNATIVES, BECAUSE (IN PART) was informed about the presence of the missiles? Before that date, just how troubled was Kennedy by Republican charges that he was ignoring evidence of "offensive" Soviet weapons in Cuba? Because the Cuban issue was becoming the noisiest one and the president preferred to make Medicare the dominant issue, did Kennedy welcome or seek a crisis over Cuba that would enable him to fend off his critics before the elections?⁶ Put another way, was the political threat to the Democrats sufficient to cause the president to manufacture or dangerously manipulate a confrontation with the Soviet Union? *e.g. no if 24 Sept - Oct 20? Inform Oct 16*

Second, from October 16 to October 22, the day the president stirred the world with a major television address, did Kennedy and his advisers think about the political consequences of their policy choices or make diplomatic and military decisions based on their anxiety over the forthcoming November elections? Did the decision to announce the discovery of the missiles and United States countermeasures via public television rather than through private negotiations stem from political motives? *party?*

Third, from October 22 to October 28, when the crisis abated after Soviet agreement to withdraw the missiles in exchange for a pledge by the United States not to intervene in Cuba again, did Kennedy and the Democrats play politics with the crisis?

Fourth, from October 28 to election day November 6, did the president and the Democrats attempt to exploit for political advantage the American "victory" over the Soviets?

Finally, on November 6, was the outcome of the congressional elections determined by people's perceptions that the president—and his party—had handled the Cuban crisis so well that they should be rewarded with votes? Did the missile crisis measurably shape the behavior of the American voter in 1962? In the elections the Republicans lost four seats in the Senate and gained only two seats in the House—an unusually poor performance in midterm elections for a party out of power. Without the missile crisis would the Republicans have made the traditional comeback of the party out of power?

Prospects for 1962

The political climate appeared favorable to the Republicans in 1962. Only once in the twentieth century, in 1934, had the party of an incumbent president improved at midterm its position in the House of Representatives; and not since that year had the party in power in the White House enhanced its strength in the Senate. In fact, in midterm elections from 1938 through 1958 the party out of power had gained 75, 46, 55, 28, 21, and 50 House seats and 7, 9, 13, 5, 1, and 15 Senate seats. In 1962 Republican leaders privately projected gains of 10 to 20 House seats for their

⁶ The 1962 "campaign kit" of the Democratic National Committee, for example, was devoted almost entirely to the Medicare issue. The *Democratic Fact Book*, part of the kit, devoted only a paragraph to Cuba. *Democratic Fact Book* (Aug. 1962), box 23-G-4-2F, Senatorial Files, Hubert H. Humphrey Papers (Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul).

party; publicly they expressed the hope of electing the additional 44 members needed to become the majority in the House.⁷ "History is so much against us," President Kennedy lamented at a press conference. The historian and presidential assistant Schlesinger urged Kennedy to distance himself from the elections so as to avoid being personally blamed for the expected defeats. With his legislative program under attack and fearing the loss of 15 to 20 House seats, the president decided instead to campaign actively.⁸

Month after month and analysis after analysis, it became evident to the White House that 1962 promised to be an unusual political year: The Democrats were going to do well. The nature of the Kennedy victory in 1960, for example, suggested that midterm election tradition was likely to be broken. In 1960, for the first time in the twentieth century, the party that regained the presidency after being out of the White House failed to increase its congressional representation. Kennedy ran further behind the congressional candidates of his ticket than any other president elected since the beginning of the two-party system. As a rule he did not help Democratic candidates. Democratic Rep. John Blatnik of Minnesota believed that in his state the congressional candidates actually helped Kennedy more than he helped them. On a national basis in 1960, Democratic House candidates ran five percentage points ahead of Kennedy. Normally the successful presidential candidate attracts the votes of both party loyalists and independents and carries into office marginal nominees of his own party. Then, in the midterm contests, the marginal candidates must run without the benefit of the presidential coattails, and many lose. In 1960, however, Kennedy did not help to elect such vulnerable representatives. Thus the type of person most likely to be defeated by Republicans in 1962 was not holding office. From that perspective the probable outcome of the midterm elections was a new Congress that would resemble the old one.⁹ *Shel 4 more 2 seats seats (info?) under - difference?*

American voting behavior, especially that of the independent voter, also suggested that the Democrats would score gains in 1962. One-fifth of the electorate that year considered itself independent of party affiliation. Independents of that time were less prone to vote in off-year elections than were people who identified themselves as Republicans or Democrats. One analyst for the Democratic National Committee read this to mean that the Democratic party, as the more popular party by a four-to-three margin in registrations, would actually pick up seats in both houses. And, he advised, given the fading of the religious issue, Democratic gains would be made among voters who had cast ballots against Kennedy in 1960 because he was a Roman Catholic.¹⁰

⁷ U.S. Bureau of the Census, Department of Commerce, *Historical Statistics of the United States*, pt. 2 (Washington, 1975), 1083; *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962 (Washington, 1962), 1034.

⁸ Schlesinger, *Thousand Days*, 756, 757; Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 353-54.

⁹ Angus Campbell, "Prospects for November: Why We Can Expect More of the Same," *New Republic*, Oct. 8, 1962, pp. 13, 14-15; John Blatnik interview by Joseph E. O'Connor, Feb. 4, 1966, Oral History Interview, transcript, p. 32 (John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, Mass.); Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Memorandum for the President, Aug. 27, 1962, box 18, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Papers, *ibid.*; *Newsweek*, Oct. 1, 1962, p. 24.

¹⁰ George Belknap to Hubert H. Humphrey, memorandum, n.d., box 23-G-4-2F, Senatorial Files, Humphrey Papers; Campbell, "Prospects for November," 13-15. *e.g. 12 seats in the House and 13 seats in the Senate (info?) under - difference?*

Table 1
Preferences for Congressional Candidates, 1962
(By Party)

Month	Percentage Preferring the Democratic Party	Percentage Preferring the Republican Party
January	60	40
March	61	39
May	58	42
July	55	45
September	57	43
October	56	44
November	55.5	44.5

SOURCE: *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 5, 1962.

Polling data also revealed the improbability of a Republican victory in 1962. Throughout the year George H. Gallup's organization measured party preference. Polling results indicated a slight slippage for the Democrats but revealed no discernable trend toward the Republican party, even during the critical months of September and October (see table 1). The polls released by Gallup on October 24 and November 5 were particularly telling. The interviews for the October 24 release were conducted between October 1 and 7; polling data for the November 5 release were obtained between October 29 and November 2. Thus Gallup completed one set of interviews after Cuba had become a serious campaign issue but before the missile crisis and another set after both Kennedy's public confrontation with the Soviets and the Soviet decision to remove the missiles. No appreciable difference in results existed between the polls. Gallup also asked Americans which political party they thought "could do a better job of handling" the country's problems. On that question, too, the Democrats consistently outscored the Republicans (see table 2).¹¹

Another polling organization, Louis Harris and Associates, Inc., directly supplied the president with data and recommendations based on its findings. In an October 4, 1962, memorandum Louis Harris told Kennedy that he was "more in control of this election than ever before," provided that he continued to stress the Republicans' dangerous partisanship on foreign and domestic issues. By early October, Harris reported, civil rights, war and peace, and medical care had emerged as dominant issues. Harris's analysis revealed that Kennedy's handling of the Mississippi crisis (the tension and violence surrounding the enrollment of a black student, James Meredith, at the University of Mississippi in September) had won favor in key northern industrial states by as much as a three-to-one margin. Democrats could therefore emphasize the need for the type of strong leadership Kennedy had demonstrated by his sending of federal troops to Mississippi, as well as hit Republican obstructionism on other domestic issues, such as aid to the unemployed, depressed areas, the ill, and college students.

¹¹ George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll: Public Opinion, 1935-1971* (3 vols., New York, 1972), III, 1788.

Table 2
Preferences for Parties to Handle National Problems, 1962

Month	Percentage Preferring the Democratic Party	Percentage Preferring the Republican Party	No Difference
August ^a	34	17	35
September ^b	38	20	30
October ^c	35	20	33

SOURCE: Gallup Organization polling data (Roper Center, Institute for Social Inquiry, University of Connecticut, Storrs).

NOTE: Numbers do not add up to 100 because some respondents had no opinion or gave answers that did not fit the three categories.

^a Poll conducted August 23-28.

^b Poll conducted September 20-25.

^c Poll conducted October 19-24.

Harris also advised that Mississippi had taken "some of the edge off the Cuban issue," although most interviewees disapproved Kennedy's record on the latter (62 to 38). Still, a majority (68 to 32) opposed going to war in Cuba, and majorities ranging from 70 to 80 percent applauded Kennedy's toughness in holding the line in Berlin. On Cuba, Harris counseled, the Democrats should say that the Republicans were reckless, that they "would deliberately shoot craps with the destiny of this nation, would play petty politics with the national security." By reiterating such themes in domestic and foreign affairs, Harris prophesied, "you can alter the outcome in at least half the major Senate and Gubernatorial campaigns and can affect the results in 20 swing House Districts." Overall, then, the pollster Harris sketched for the president a rosy election picture just a couple of weeks before the missile crisis. Nowhere in the document was there the slightest hint that another foreign crisis, well managed by the White House, would improve already good Democratic chances in November.¹² The precrisis information from analysts thus pointed to an impressive Democratic performance in the midterm elections.

But I don't plan to mention it
repeated JFK deal - with the help of K (when he had recently provided more than he was expected to get in 1960)
The Cuban Issue before October 16

Soon after Fidel Castro's triumph in January 1959, Cuba became a political issue in the United States. When the Republicans were making foreign policy under President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Democrats had asked why Castro and the increasingly radical Cuban Revolution were permitted to rise and flourish. When the Democrats under Kennedy were formulating foreign policy, Republicans charged that the administration was doing too little to unseat Castro and was allowing the Soviets to convert the Caribbean island into a Communist outpost. After Cuba and the Soviet Union signed a trade and aid agreement in February 1960, critics of the

¹² Lou Harris, "The New Shape of this Campaign," Memorandum to the President, Oct. 4, 1962, box 105, President's Office Files, John F. Kennedy Presidential Papers (Kennedy Library) (by permission of Louis Harris and Associates, Inc.).

Castro regime who had been arguing that the Cuban Revolution had earlier turned "red" felt vindicated. The next month President Eisenhower ordered the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to train anti-Castro Cuban exiles for an invasion of their homeland. In July, in an attempt to cripple the Cuban economy and thus to weaken Castro, the administration cut Cuba's sugar quota, virtually stopping imports from the island; in October most American exports to Cuba were prohibited.¹³

Those events in the deterioration of Cuban-American relations sparked debate in the United States, particularly in the campaign of 1960. Kennedy repeatedly upbraided the Republicans, charging that they had let Cuba become a Communist satellite. Just before leaving office, Eisenhower broke diplomatic relations with Cuba. In April 1961 came the bungled CIA operation at the Bay of Pigs and swirling debate over its failure. As Kennedy lamented after the debacle, he had "handed his critics a stick with which they would forever beat him." The Bay of Pigs, Sorensen later said, was the administration's "heaviest political cross."¹⁴ With strident rhetoric echoing between Washington and Havana, the Kennedy administration set about to destroy the Castro government. The clandestine Operation Mongoose, begun in late 1961, included sabotage, paramilitary raids, disruption of the sugar trade, circulation of counterfeit money, and other so-called dirty tricks. As well, the CIA plotted to assassinate Castro. The secret war against Cuba did not weaken Castro's hold on the island, and it probably stimulated Cuban requests for Soviet protection. Nor did the covert operations disarm the Republicans, because the Kennedy administration, of course, could not take public credit for such activities. Then came the United States-engineered expulsion of Cuba from the Organization of American States in January 1962 and the imposition of a complete United States embargo on trade with Cuba the next month. As Cuba inched toward a closer relationship with the Soviet Union, the State Department, in March, complained about "Sino-Soviet bloc" military aid to Cuba.¹⁵

The question of a Soviet arms buildup in Cuba took on serious political dimensions in the summer of 1962 when Republican leaders began to mount an unrelenting attack against the Kennedy administration. The growing Soviet military presence in Cuba, of course, held significance in itself as a challenge to United States hegemony in Latin America. But it also provided an effective campaign issue that probed one of the administration's most vulnerable spots. And it served to divert attention from Republican vulnerabilities stemming from their opposition to popular New Frontier programs. Republicans thus strove to make Cuba, not Medicare, the leading topic of the congressional campaigns.

See also "asking for invasion": if we don't do it before it's too late
¹³ For the basic issues in United States-Cuba relations, see Cole Blasier, *The Hovering Giant: U.S. Response to Revolutionary Change in Latin America* (Pittsburgh, 1976); Lester D. Langley, *The United States and the Caribbean in the Twentieth Century* (Athens, Ga., 1982); Maurice Halperin, *The Rise and Decline of Fidel Castro: An Essay in Contemporary History* (Berkeley, 1972); Richard E. Welch, Jr., *Response to Revolution: The United States and the Cuban Revolution, 1959-1961* (Chapel Hill, 1985); Morris H. Morley, "Toward a Theory of Imperial Politics: United States Policy and the Processes of State Formation, Disintegration and Consolidation in Cuba, 1898-1978" (Ph.D. diss., State University of New York, Binghamton, 1980).

¹⁴ Peter Wyden, *Bay of Pigs: The Untold Story* (New York, 1979), 310; Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 669.
¹⁵ Schlesinger, *Robert Kennedy and His Times*, 468-98, 533-58; U.S. Department of State, "Sino-Soviet Bloc Military Aid to Cuba," Press Release No. 195, March 27, 1962, Kenneth Keating Papers (University of Rochester Library, Rochester, N.Y.).

The Republican indictment held that the administration was willfully withholding from the American people damning information about the enlargement of the Soviet military presence in Cuba and was underestimating the Soviet threat in the Caribbean. Whereas Kennedy argued that Soviet technicians had been stationed on the island, Republicans called them troops. Whereas Kennedy had insisted that Soviet missiles in Cuba were "defensive" (short-range surface-to-air), Republicans labeled them "offensive" (surface-to-air and surface-to-surface). Decrying a Soviet besmirching of the Monroe Doctrine, Republicans demanded immediate action—either a blockade or an invasion of Cuba. Uneasy Democrats dismissed such pleas as election-year high jinks but could not shed the charge that Kennedy was timid in curbing the flow of Soviet arms and personnel to Cuba. Kennedy himself admitted at a press conference on August 22 that supplies "in large quantities" had reached Cuba. Seven days later, in answer to charges made by Republican Sen. Homer E. Capehart, who was seeking reelection in Indiana, the president insisted that technicians, not troops, were accompanying the arms.¹⁶

Kennedy's statements hardly satisfied Kenneth B. Keating. The Republican senator from New York, who was not standing for reelection, became his party's chief protagonist on Cuba, making some twenty-five public statements prior to the missile crisis. In speech after speech Keating presented details that made him appear authoritative. In his first major assault, on August 31, he said, for example, "On August 13 five Soviet torpedo boats unloaded from Soviet ships, and are now moored at La Base." On September 4 in the Senate, Keating added more details on the Soviet military buildup and claimed there were missiles in Cuba, although as was common for him at first, he made little distinction between short-range, "defensive," surface-to-air missiles (SAMS) and longer-range, "offensive," surface-to-surface missiles (medium-range—MRBMS—and intermediate-range—IRBMS) that could reach the United States. That day the president tried to quiet the clamor by meeting with congressional leaders of both parties and by stating that neither Soviet combat troops nor ground-to-ground missiles existed in Cuba. But, he assured all, if "offensive" Soviet weapons ever appeared in Cuba, the "gravest issues would arise." The next day Keating dismissed the president's explanation: "Who is to say whether a weapon is offensive or defensive? It depends on the direction in which it is aimed." With others, such as Senator Goldwater, adding their voices of criticism, Senate Minority Leader Everett Dirksen of Illinois declared that "we Republicans are not dragging Cuba into the campaign, but the people are."¹⁷

The president temporarily took the initiative on September 7. Without specifically mentioning Cuba or Berlin, he asked Congress for standby authority to

He proposed to give the states the authority to blockade the Cuban coast.
¹⁶ *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, John F. Kennedy: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President, January 1 to December 31, 1962* (Washington, 1963), 638, 652.

¹⁷ *Congressional Record*, 87 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 108, pt. 14, Aug. 31, 1962, pp. 18359-18361; *ibid.*, Sept. 4, 1962, pp. 18438-18439; *New York Times*, Sept. 5, 1962, pp. 1, 2; press release, Sept. 5, 1962, Speech File, Keating Papers; *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962, 333. For a chronology of relations between Cuba and the United States and the politics related thereto, see Republican Congressional Committee, "The Cuban Issue: A Chronology," May 1963, box 551, John Sherman Cooper Papers (University of Kentucky Library, Lexington); and U.S. Congress, Senate, Committee of Foreign Relations, *Events in United States-Cuba Relations: A Chronology 1957-1963* (Washington, 1963).

call up 150,000 military reservists to meet challenges "in any part of the free world."¹⁸ Just hours before, Senator Dirksen and and Rep. Charles A. Halleck (Republican of Indiana) had urged a more specific focus: a joint congressional resolution authorizing the president to use troops if necessary to "meet the Cuban problem." Although former President Eisenhower warned against making Cuba "an object of partisan fighting," many Republicans were determined to do just that in the congressional campaigns. Sen. Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota counterattacked for the Democrats. On September 11 he chastised "swaggering irresponsibles" in Congress who were trying "to make political capital." Even if there were threatening missiles in Cuba—and he denied that there were—the United States could destroy them in one day. One should not "lose a night's sleep worrying about the might of Cuba," Humphrey remarked. Unmoved, on the next day three Republican senators proposed amendments to the reserve mobilization bill; they would empower the president to "take such action as is necessary" to prevent the violation of the Monroe Doctrine in Cuba.¹⁹

"The Congressional head of steam on this is the most serious that we have had," National Security Affairs adviser McGeorge Bundy told the president. Bundy feared that the administration "may appear to be weak and indecisive." The president must speak out with "a very clear and aggressive explanation" of United States policy to establish that the Cuban problem was "within our control." Bundy opposed any congressional authorization to use American power unless it was stated in general terms like those in the Formosa Resolution (1955) or the Eisenhower Doctrine (1957). At his press conference on September 13, the president took Bundy's advice and opened with a formal statement: "If at any time the Communist buildup in Cuba were to endanger or interfere with our security in any way . . . or if Cuba should . . . become an offensive military base of significant capacity for the Soviet Union, then this country will do whatever must be done to protect its own security and that of its allies." Still, the Republicans pressed the attack, with Keating claiming that the short-range missile facilities in Cuba could be transformed into intermediate-range sites.²⁰

On September 29 the Senate adopted the Cuba Resolution expressing United States determination to use arms if necessary to prevent Cuban subversion or aggression in the hemisphere and the island's conversion into an externally supported military base endangering United States security. Backed by Democrats as consistent with the president's statement of September 13, the measure also passed the House

¹⁸ *Public Papers . . . Kennedy*, 665. The Senate approved the measure on September 13. The House passed it on September 24. Kennedy signed the bill into law on October 3.

¹⁹ *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962, 333; *Congressional Record*, 87 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 108, pt. 14, Sept. 11, 1962, pp. 19073–19075; Humphrey to James Reston, Sept. 17, 1962, box 23-J6-3B, Senatorial Files, Humphrey Papers; Republican Congressional Committee, "Cuban Issue," 9. For examples of Republican charges of Democratic appeasement over Cuba, see *ibid.*, 8–9; and *Congressional Record*, 87 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 108, pt. 14, Sept. 11, 1962, p. 19003.

²⁰ McGeorge Bundy, "Memorandum on Cuba for the press conference," Sept. 13, 1962, box 48, Theodore C. Sorensen Papers (Kennedy Library); *Public Papers . . . Kennedy*, 674; "Selected Cuba Chronology—1962," Political Files, Keating Papers; *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962, 334; Newsletter, Sept. 13, 1962, Cotton Papers; Republican Congressional Committee, "Cuban Issue," 9.



Senator William B. Keating using a Minuteman missile model as a pointer, January 13, 1963. Kenneth B. Keating Papers. Courtesy University of Rochester Library, Rochester, New York.

by a wide margin. Keating dismissed the resolution as "worthless" unless the United States followed it up with a "more decisive policy." Although Kentucky Sen. John Sherman Cooper voted for the resolution, he cautioned his Republican colleagues not to use Cuba as "a political gambit."²¹

Political gambit it was, and the Republicans were successful in making Cuba a troublesome political issue for the Democrats, who were put in the unenviable position of seeming to be hiding something. Mail poured into politicians' offices demanding forthright action against Cuba.²² In the Times Square subway station in New York City, a "Directomat" machine that gave Republican Sen. Jacob Javits' views was punched most often during the last week of September for "What is the Javits Record on Cuba and Castro?" Professional polls showed that Cuba had grown into a prominent issue for the American electorate. Kennedy tried instead to stress domestic issues. In a campaign swing through the Midwest on October 5–7, the president barely mentioned foreign policy.²³

²¹ *Congressional Record*, 87 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 108, pt. 15, Sept. 20, 1962, p. 20058; *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962, 334–35; Press Release, Sept. 20, 1962, Speech Files, Keating Papers; Remarks, Sept. 20, 1962, box 351, Cooper Papers.

²² See, for example, Lee Metcalf Papers (Montana Historical Society, Helena).

²³ Press Release, Javits Campaign Headquarters, Sept. 30, 1962, ser. 1, box 28, Jacob Javits Papers (State University of New York, Stony Brook). Gallup polls asked: "What do you think is the most important problem facing

But Kennedy could not easily ignore Keating's major Senate speech of October 10. In that speech Keating boldly claimed that intermediate-range missiles, capable of striking targets in "the American heartland," had been installed in Cuba. Six launching pads were being prepared, he said. Did Keating know for sure? He could not have. He possessed no conclusive evidence about Soviet "offensive" missiles in Cuba. As Republican Sen. Bourke B. Hickenlooper of Iowa recalled: "I had the same information that Ken Keating had, but basically it came from Cuban refugees, and I couldn't depend upon its reliability or separate fact from wishful thinking."²⁴ Nor, of course, did anyone in the administration have such information—not even Keating's alleged informant or informants in the government. Although government officials had received in late September and early October reports from observers in Cuba, they reasonably concluded that such reportage was questionable and "soft."²⁵ *NOT ALL - BY OCT. 10 - SEE NOTES, MINN. SCHEDULE OF U-2*

Actually, Keating and administration officials learned about Soviet surface-to-surface missiles in Cuba at just about the same time. On October 14 intelligence officials learned from photographs taken during a U-2 surveillance flight that such missiles were in Cuba. Had bad weather on October 11, 12, and 13 not prevented the U-2 aircraft from flying over Cuba, intelligence officials could have had hard, confirming evidence at just about the same time Keating was making his public case about intermediate-range missiles. United States officials had all along been monitoring (U-2 planes made runs over parts of Cuba on August 29, September 5, 17, 26, and 29, and October 5 and 7) the flow and positioning of Soviet weapons. When they discovered the "offensive" missile sites in western Cuba, they acted vigorously against them, as they said they would if and when they received proof. Keating's "soft" data ultimately proved to be correct. But the president, recalled Secretary of State Dean Rusk, needed more than "speculation, guesswork, fears"; he had to have "very clear and precise and hard information" that "offensive" weapons were in Cuba before he could confront the Soviets and rally other nations behind United States action. The president, it should be noted, never ordered

this country today?" In August only 2% mentioned Cuba. In late September 25% cited Cuba. In the poll conducted October 19–24, 26% mentioned Cuba. Gallup Organization polling data (Roper Center, Institute for Social Inquiry, University of Connecticut, Storrs). A September *Des Moines Register and Tribune* poll asked whether Cuba was a "serious threat" to American security; 81% answered "yes." IOWA 62–168, *ibid.* A *Minneapolis Tribune* poll of late September found that 78% thought Cuba a "serious threat" to the United States. Minn. 215, *ibid.* Once during his campaign swing, Kennedy criticized the Republicans for having "ignored" Latin America in the 1950s. *Public Papers . . . Kennedy*, 737.

²⁴ *Congressional Record*, 87 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 108, pt. 17, Oct. 10, 1962, p. 22957; *ibid.*, Oct. 9, 1962, p. 22889; Bourke B. Hickenlooper to William P. Knowland, Jan. 2, 1963, box 29, Bourke B. Hickenlooper Papers (Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa).

²⁵ Mystery surrounds Kenneth B. Keating's sources, for the senator, who died in 1975, repeatedly refused to divulge them. He may have received information from Florida-based Cuban exiles and their organizations or from officers in the Department of Defense. Keating's papers at the University of Rochester provide very few clues, and former members of his staff, who communicated with Paterson by telephone or letter, have been unable or unwilling to provide details. See *U.S. News & World Report*, Nov. 19, 1962, p. 86; Kenneth B. Keating, "My Advance View of the Cuban Crisis," *Look*, Nov. 3, 1964, pp. 96, 99, 100, 102, 104, 106; Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, 177–80; United Press International, release, Oct. 19, 1964, Keating Papers; *Congressional Record*, 87 Cong., 2 sess., vol. 108, pt. 14, Aug. 31, 1962, pp. 18359–18361; and Robert R. McMillan, "A Look Back at Cuban Missile Crisis," *Newsday*, Oct. 14, 1983, p. 72.

specific U-2 flights to counter specific Republican criticisms; apparently he did not participate in selecting dates for flights before October 16 but, rather, approved decisions made by officials in the CIA and the Department of Defense.²⁶ *W.H.*

On October 16, the very day Kennedy was being shown the shocking U-2 photographs of sites for medium-range (1,100 miles) and intermediate range (2,200 miles) missiles, the chairman of the Republican National Committee tagged Cuba the dominant issue of the fall campaign—a "symbol of the tragic irresolution of the Administration." On the eve of the missile crisis, then, the Republicans seemed to have outmaneuvered the Democrats over Cuba, but not so much so, analysts and pollsters reported, to deny the Democrats an impressive showing in the forthcoming midterm elections. By mid-October, in fact, monotonously repeated Republican accusations had lost some of their punch, press coverage of Cuba had decreased, and other events—Mississippi, Berlin, and an Organization of American States meeting—had diverted attention. Still, the new information discovered by the U-2 might boost the Republicans by demonstrating that they had been right all along. Kennedy saw political trouble ahead. "We've just elected Capehart in Indiana, and Ken Keating will probably be the next President of the United States," remarked Kennedy when he first saw the U-2 pictures.²⁷

if not the "danger" suggested - certainly needed in the
October 16–October 22 *probably (at least) to a certain degree*
has early morning problem

From the presentation of the aerial photographs of missile sites in Cuba to the president on the morning of October 16 to Kennedy's nationally televised speech in the evening of October 22, a specially constituted group of advisers, later called the Executive Committee (ExCom) of the National Security Council, met frequently to debate courses of action. The options of invasion, bombing, blockade, and diplomacy were explored in exhausting sessions often marked by frank disagreement and changing minds. To what extent did the president and his top advisers think or talk politics during that tense week? Did "the political needs" of the administration compel it "to take almost any risk to get them [the missiles] out," as Kennedy's ambassador to India, John Kenneth Galbraith, later suggested?²⁸ Did political considerations shape the two key decisions? The chief decision was to quarantine Cuba to prevent further military shipments to the island and to impress the Soviets with the serious American intention of forcing the missiles out. The second major deci-

²⁶ Only the Sept. 5 and Oct. 14 flights covered the western portion of the island (where the Soviets were deploying the missiles), because United States officials feared a plane would be shot down by a surface-to-air missile. For a discussion of intelligence gathering from four sources—ships docking in Cuba, refugees, CIA agents in Cuba, U-2 flights—see Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, 159–92. The U-2 flights were the most swift, accurate, and reliable. Intelligence data from a variety of sources, including U-2 flights, reached top-level officials such as Vice Pres. Lyndon B. Johnson. Col. Howard Burris, memoranda, box 6, Vice Presidential Security File, Johnson Papers; John A. McCone interview by Joe B. Frantz, Aug. 19, 1970, John A. McCone Oral History Interview, *ibid.*; Hilsman to Paterson, Dec. 12, 1984 (in Paterson's possession); "The Cuban Missile Crisis," cond. by Alfred P. Sloan Foundation (New York, N.Y.), Jan. 27, 1983, transcript of videotape (in Sloan Foundation's possession).

²⁷ *New York Times*, Oct. 17, 1962, pp. 1, 24; Montague Kern, Patricia W. Levering, and Ralph B. Levering, *The Kennedy Crises: The Press, the Presidency and Foreign Policy* (Chapel Hill, 1983), 117–22; O'Donnell and Powers with McCarthy, *Johnny We Hardly Knew Ye*, 310.

²⁸ Steel, "Endgame," 15.

** * * (this group) didn't discuss anything, with*
HE THOUGHT
TO NEW CREDIT HE WASN'T PREPARED TO DO SO. THINGS WERE GOING TO BE HANDLED TO THEM, TAKE SOME

sion was tactical: to inform the Soviets of United States policy through a television address rather than through private negotiations or traditional diplomatic channels.

The several sources for October 16–22 available to the scholar reveal some discussion of politics within the small circle of presidential advisers. Yet the transcripts of the two meetings of October 16, Sorensen's private papers, National Security Council documents, a postcrisis internal report, Defense Department briefings, former President Eisenhower's memoranda of conversation with Kennedy and CIA officials, notes or recollections of such legislative leaders as Sen. Richard B. Russell of Georgia, oral histories, memoirs, the president's appointment books and "doodles," and other materials suggest that politics was very seldom discussed and did not determine the choice of the naval blockade.²⁹ Nor do the historical records indicate that the tactic of a surprise television address rather than a private advance warning was shaped by politics, although questions cloud this issue.

For many reasons Kennedy felt compelled to act decisively against the Soviet emplacement of missiles in Cuba. First, he felt tricked, for the Soviets had told the United States on more than one occasion that they would not put into Cuba missiles that could reach the United States and that they would refrain from actions that might aggravate international tensions before the fall elections.³⁰ Second, Kennedy's long-standing Cold War posture and ardent desire to discipline or to remove Castro urged upon him a confrontationist policy, as did his tendency to personalize international contests and his need to prove his toughness and to win—evident in his October 16 comment on learning about the missiles that "he can't do that to me!"³¹ He was moved to act, too, by the appearance of a shift in the strategic balance of power and of a diminution of United States standing in Latin America, a traditional sphere of influence.³² Kennedy was, of course, also cognizant of his Repub-

²⁹ The October 16 transcripts ("Kennedy tapes"), National Security Council minutes, Sorensen's papers, various oral histories, Frank A. Sievers' report, "The Cuban Crisis, 1962," and the president's appointment books and "doodles" are in the Kennedy Library. Eisenhower's memoranda are in Post-Presidential Papers (Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kans.). Richard B. Russell's notes of an October 22 meeting with Kennedy are in his papers at the University of Georgia. Briefings such as that of October 22 have been released to researchers by the Defense Department. Among the memoirs by participants are Robert F. Kennedy, *Thirteen Days: A Memoir of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York, 1969); Sorensen, *Kennedy*; Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*; Dean Acheson, "Dean Acheson's Version of Robert Kennedy's Version of the Cuban Missile Affair," *Esquire*, 71 (Feb. 1969), 76–77, 44, 46; George W. Ball, *The Past Has Another Pattern: Memoirs* (New York, 1982); O'Donnell and Powers with McCarthy, *Johnny We Hardly Knew Ye*"; Charles E. Bohlen, *Witness to History, 1929–1969* (New York, 1973); Maxwell D. Taylor, *Swords and Plowshares* (New York, 1972); and U. Alexis Johnson and Jef Olivarius McAllister, *The Right Hand of Power* (Englewood Cliffs, 1984).

³⁰ Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 667; Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 26; Stewart Alsop and Charles Bartlett, "In Time of Crisis," *Saturday Evening Post*, Dec. 8, 1962, p. 18; Chester Bowles, *Promises to Keep: My Years in Public Life, 1941–1969* (New York, 1971), 418; Dinerstein, *Making of a Missile Crisis*, 181; Hilsman, *To Move a Nation*, 166; Thomas G. Paterson, "Bearing the Burden: A Critical Look at JFK's Foreign Policy," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 54 (Spring 1978), 193–212.

³¹ Quoted in Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 193. See also Paterson, "Bearing the Burden," 193–212; Garry Wills, *The Kennedy Imprisonment: A Meditation on Power* (Boston, 1983); James D. Barber, *The Presidential Character: Predicting Performance in the White House* (Englewood Cliffs, 1972), 293–343; Graham Allison, "Cuban Missiles and Kennedy Macho: New Evidence to Dispel the Myth," *Washington Monthly*, 4 (Oct. 1972), 14–19; Thomas M. Mongar, "Personality and Decision-Making: John F. Kennedy in Four Crisis Decisions," *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 2 (June 1969), 200–225.

³² Ball, *Past*, 289. Sorensen has noted that the strategic balance "would have been substantially altered in appearance; and in matters of national will and world leadership, as the President said later, such appearances con-

litan-induced public pledges to take resolute action against offensive weapons in Cuba. To the extent that presidents must always act in a political arena and to the extent that politics refers to the politician's desire to fulfill promises, politics demanded that Kennedy remove the missiles. But presidents have always enjoyed considerable freedom of action in the making of foreign policy, and, in this case, politics or anxiety over the congressional elections did not decide specific courses of action. On October 16 Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara appreciated the distinction between acting in general and acting in particular when he recognized that the administration had "a domestic political problem" on its hands because of previous presidential statements. Yet "we didn't say we'd go in . . . and kill them, we said we'd act. Well, how will we act?" McNamara, for one, preferred a blockade of Cuba instead of military options.³³

At the two ExCom meetings of October 16, there was scant political discussion. In the first meeting the advisers worried about keeping the news secret until they had decided on policy. Keating's name came up, prompting speculation about his sources of information. Should the Senator be interviewed to check out his data? The president thought Keating would prove unhelpful, and Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy feared the senator would say "afterwards that we tried to . . . dun him." The participants in the meeting largely discussed the operational status of the missiles, alternatives for removing them, and Soviet motives.³⁴ Nowhere in the transcripts of the two October 16 meetings are there comments to the effect that the administration or the Democratic party would suffer in November or after if a certain decision, such as one for an air strike, was not made.

Politics was not adjourned, of course. While his advisers puzzled over policy, the president went on the campaign trail. Campaign plans had called for Kennedy to travel across the nation, especially on weekends in late September and October. Until October 20 Kennedy kept his political schedule; on that day, feigning a head cold, he canceled his politicking and returned to Washington. His speeches before then, as Harris had advised, recommended the election of Democrats to insure the passage of critical domestic legislation. Kennedy gave little attention to foreign policy and gave no hint of an impending crisis. He did not sound an international "time of peril" theme. He did not try to entice Republicans into statements they would find embarrassing after the missile crisis became public. In short, the president did not play politics with Cuba at three stops in Connecticut on October 17, or in Springfield, Illinois, Cleveland, and Chicago on October 19.³⁵

tribute to reality." Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 678. Kennedy said to his advisers on October 16: "It makes them look like they're coequal with us. . . . After all this is a political struggle as much as military." Treasury Secretary C. Douglas Dillon added it would appear "We're scared of the Cubans." "Off-the-Record Meeting on Cuba," 6:30–7:55 P.M., Oct. 16, 1962, Presidential Recordings transcript, pp. 14–15, 46 (Kennedy Library).

³³ "Off-the-Record Meeting on Cuba," 6:30–7:55 P.M., Oct. 16, 1962, Presidential Recordings transcript, p. 46 (Kennedy Library).

³⁴ "Off-the-Record Meeting on Cuba," 11:50 A.M.–12:57 P.M., Oct. 16, 1962, Presidential Recordings transcript, p. 19, 26, *ibid*.

³⁵ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., Memorandum to the President, Aug. 13, 1962, box 18, Subject File: Politicking, Schlesinger Papers; boxes 40–41, Speech Files, President's Office Files, *ibid*; O'Donnell and Powers with McCarthy, *Johnny We Hardly Knew Ye*, 307; *Public Papers . . . Kennedy*, 695–804. Vice President Johnson, touring several

On October 18, during a crisis meeting, Secretary of the Treasury C. Douglas Dillon passed a handwritten note to Sorensen. "Have you considered the very real possibility," Dillon asked, "that if we allow Cuba to complete installation & operational readiness of missile bases, the next House of Representatives is likely to have a Republican majority? This would completely paralyze our ability to react sensibly & coherently to further Soviet advances." This curious document is one of the few time-of-crisis records that speak directly to the relationship between politics and decisions. It came from a *Republican* serving in a Democratic administration—a Republican who seemed strangely to favor a Republican defeat in November. Actually, Dillon was using the political argument only to move the advisers toward his hardline position that decisive military action must be taken against Cuba—a position that was losing ground to the option of a blockade. Dillon apparently concluded that the president was *not* thinking politically and that a political case would persuade him to accept the use of substantial military force. The president and his other aides, of course, may have pondered the impact of their decisions on the congressional elections, but neither their records nor their decisions demonstrate such. And they did not accept Dillon's recommendation for an air strike, which would have conceivably proved more attractive to voters than a quarantine, which held the potential of a drawn-out crisis, and which in itself could not prevent the continuing assembly of missile components already in Cuba. As Dillon knew, moreover, Kennedy had no intention of ever accepting operational missiles.³⁶ The question was never whether to act but, rather, when to take which action. *OR TRADE.*

Meanwhile, politicians not privy to the secret deliberations of the president's advisers continued to spar over Cuba. The Cuban issue, Kennedy remarked to Sorensen on October 20, was "very harmful to the Democrats," because it proved that the Republicans had been right. And whereas some critics would condemn the Democrats for having been "soft" on Communism and Castro, others would soon denounce them as a war party. Kennedy believed "that whichever way he turned it was politically damaging at home," Sorensen recalled. But on the next day, Eisenhower, having not yet been consulted or briefed by Kennedy officials but, like the press, perhaps sensing forthcoming momentous decisions regarding Cuba, quarreled with his party chairman's designation of Cuba as the dominant issue of the campaign. "I think that probably we have heard the last of it. At least I hope so."³⁷

western states, did speak about ridding Cuba of Castro and the Soviets. But his speeches were probably prepared before October 16 and were not coordinated with missile crisis officials in Washington. Memorandum, n.d., Johnson Papers; Democratic National Committee News Release, "Honolulu Remarks of Lyndon B. Johnson," Oct. 21, 1962, Statements of Lyndon B. Johnson, Johnson Papers.

³⁶ C. Douglas Dillon to Sorensen, Oct. 18, 1962, box 48, Sorensen Papers; Dillon to Paterson, March 13, 1985 (in Paterson's possession). For Kennedy's vow on October 18 that operational medium-range ballistic missiles in Cuba would not be permitted, see Frank A. Sieverts, "The Cuban Crisis, 1962," [1963], p. 48, box 49, National Security File (Kennedy Library).

³⁷ Officials of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) were working to counter the Republicans on the Cuban issue. They drafted a hard-hitting presidential speech on Cuba that proclaimed that Republican "fire-eaters" themselves had "helped Castro to power and floundered in a morass of indecision while Castro and his Red advisers won firm control of the island." Cuba was "a false issue in this campaign to divert attention from the real issues." On October 22, the day Kennedy was scheduled to deliver his televised address, Press Secretary Pierre Salinger



President John F. Kennedy addressing the nation by television, October 22, 1962.

Courtesy John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, Massachusetts.

(Political calculation made with NEVER CHANGED, OR NEEDED DISCUSSION. OCT 16 - NOT AIL CALCULATION.)

On October 22 Washington throbbed with anticipation. At noon the White House had announced an important 7:00 P.M. presidential speech, and journalists had already determined that Cuba was the topic. Some twenty congressional leaders—Congress was not in session, and the members were campaigning or vacationing—were summoned to the nation's capital for a special meeting with the president. First, at 3:00 P.M., Kennedy convened the full National Security Council. Mentioning the "domestic aspects of the crisis," he told its members that he wanted "one song" sung "to make it clear that there was now no difference among his advisers as to the proper course to follow." Secretary Rusk stated that "if anyone thought our response was weak, they were wrong," for he expected a "flaming crisis." Rusk's comments suggest that some administration officials worried that critics

3d. will make Kennedy Pres. "hardest calculation" & PER to Hyland.
called DNC headquarters to "kill" the paper. "Kill," handwritten word on draft speech, n.d., box 681, White House Central Files (Kennedy Library). According to Sorensen, Kennedy said little about the political ramifications of the crisis during the crisis. Theodore Sorensen interview by Carl Kaysen, March 26, 1964, Theodore Sorensen Oral History Interview, transcript, pp. 64–66 (Kennedy Library). Eisenhower quoted in *New York Times*, Oct. 22, 1962, pp. 1, 21.

BUT SEE PRES. REJECTION OF INITIAL POSITION OF MEN, NITEL, RUSK, TAYLOR, (CARRIED) IF YOU ASSUME THAT INITIAL POS. WAS CONSIDERED - FOR NON-REASON THEN NO...

For C. Dillon knew his was (not longer) favoring airstrike; 18 Oct. 1962. Thus, standing of blockade was at the (and will to make) was not belittled with Oct. 22, 1962.

days, did Kennedy and the Democrats play politics with the crisis? Preoccupied with the danger of nuclear war, exhausted from the ordeal of decision making, fearful that some naval officer on patrol in the Caribbean might make a military mistake, wondering whether Castro might escalate tensions by seizing control of the missiles, and pressed by some advisers to act militarily because they believed the Russians were stalling, the president, not surprisingly, spent little time on political considerations. But he did work to reduce the partisanship over Cuba, hoping to create a national consensus. Not only would such unity at home signal Khrushchev that he could not count on exploiting divisions within the United States; it also would take the issue out of the congressional campaign.

For the most part, Republicans quickly endorsed the president's policy. As one Republican put it, Cuba was "dead for the duration." Keating allowed that the president "has taken Cuba out of politics." As much as they backed Kennedy's policy, however, Republicans also grumbled that the crisis was politically motivated. Some crowed that the president would not have acted had it not been for the opposition party's pressure, and others criticized the administration for not going all the way—getting rid of the Castro regime. Sorensen prepared a memorandum answering each of those complaints. On that which held that Kennedy was driven to act by politics, Sorensen's note answered with an emphatic "NO!"⁴²

In this period the administration sought to mold a popular, bipartisan consensus. The ExCom meeting of October 23 discussed the need for "unity on the home front." The release of low-level photographs of the missile sites "to prove to laymen [the] existence of missiles" might help, thought the Kennedy advisers. The president ordered his cabinet to cancel all campaign appearances. He called Eisenhower and urged Republicans not to make the Cuban crisis partisan. "I replied I was sure they wouldn't," recalled the former president. In another effort at bipartisanship, Kennedy sent the respected Republican public servant John J. McCloy to join Ambassador Adlai Stevenson at the United Nations. Republicans were brought into the foreign-policy discussions, Sorensen said, because "Republicans in and out of Congress would be much less likely to attack a McCloy or a [CIA Director John] McCone, McNamara or Dillon." The administration also provided regional State Department briefings for public officials of both parties in New York, Chicago, Atlanta, Fort Worth, and San Francisco.⁴³

Nearly every account of the crisis quotes a discussion of October 24 between the president and his brother Robert, which the latter related in his memoir, *Thirteen Days*. At the time Soviet ships were heading toward the naval blockade; violent confrontation seemed possible. "It looks really mean, doesn't it," the president said.

⁴² *New York Times*, Oct. 23, 1962, p. 18; *ibid.*, Oct. 24, 1962, p. 16; "Statement of Senator Cotton on President Kennedy's Speech on Cuba," Oct. 22, 1962, Cotton Papers; *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 27, 1962, pt. 1, p. 5; TCS [Sorensen], "GOP Charges That," memorandum, Oct. 28, 1962, box 48, Sorensen Papers.

⁴³ McGeorge Bundy, "Executive Committee Minutes, October 23, 1962, 10:00 A.M.," box 8, Vice Presidential Security File, Johnson Papers; Lyndon B. Johnson, handwritten notes for ExCom meeting, 10:00 A.M., Oct. 23, 1962, *ibid.*; Malcolm Moos, "Interview with President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Gettysburg, Pa., Nov. 8, 1966," box 11, Post-Presidential Papers: Augusta, Ga., Eisenhower Papers; Sorensen interview, 69; *New York Times*, Oct. 23, 1962, pp. 1, 21.

"But, then, really there was no other choice. If they get this mean on this one in our part of the world, what will they do on the next?" The attorney general replied: "I just don't think there was any choice, and not only that, if you hadn't acted, you would have been impeached." The president agreed: "That's what I think—I would have been impeached."⁴⁴ Does that exchange demonstrate that the Kennedys acted to save themselves politically? Actually it demonstrates little, because President Kennedy intended to act, to force the missiles from Cuba, from the moment he learned about them. He never hesitated in that intention; thus impeachment for inaction was a farfetched notion. Assuming that the conversation occurred exactly as reported, it was an exaggeration perhaps induced by the tensions of the moment.

If the president engaged in political partisanship during this period, it was understated. On October 25, for example, he wrote a letter intended for public release to Gov. Gaylord A. Nelson of Wisconsin, who was running for the Senate against incumbent Republican Alexander I. Wiley. Kennedy apologized for having had to cancel his campaign trip to the Badger State, "because your election is important to the nation." Without specifically mentioning the missile crisis, he went on: "More than ever before, we need men in the United States Senate who have the judgment, imagination, courage and leadership to meet the critical tests confronting our country." Since there could have been no doubt about the nation's "critical test" at that moment, the letter amounted to a campaign document exploiting the Cuban crisis to help a Democrat. Yet this appears to be the only instance of presidential politicking during the tense days of October 23–28. Even Lyndon B. Johnson, the most political of politicians, jotted down nothing of a political nature during high-level meetings in that period.⁴⁵

October 29 to Election Day, November 6

From the time of the American-Soviet agreement to the day of the midterm elections, the politics of the Cuban question heated up again. Kennedy's actions had not removed the issue from the campaign, for Republicans once again tried to win favor at the polls by charging that Kennedy's Cuba policy had failed: Cuba remained a Soviet military ally; the Monroe Doctrine stood repudiated; Castro still sat atop a Communist regime, bent on subversion in Latin America; and one way of ousting both the Castroites and the Soviets from the island in the future—invasion—had been denied by presidential pledge. Furthermore, with Castro's obstruction of on-site inspection by United Nations officials, suspicions grew that the missiles were not being removed. Unsubstantiated stories circulated by Cuban exiles suggested that the missiles were being hidden in caves.⁴⁶ As of election day Kennedy could

⁴⁴ Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 67.

⁴⁵ John F. Kennedy to Gaylord A. Nelson, Oct. 25, 1962, box 691, White House Central Files (Kennedy Library); Johnson, handwritten notes, Oct. 23–26, box 8, Vice Presidential Security File, Johnson Papers.

⁴⁶ Wallace F. Bennett to Kennedy, Nov. 1, 1962, box 47, White House Central Files (Kennedy Library). At the November 6, 1962 ExCom meeting, Kennedy called attention to such stories, which, he was told, were never substantiated. The president "asked that this fact be brought to the attention of appropriate news editors." "NSC Ex-

would say that the quarantine was inadequate and that the Democrats were still too timid on Cuba. The president may have thought similarly when he entered the 5:00 P.M. legislative leaders' meeting to explain his ultimatum to the Soviets and the imposition of a naval blockade. The Republicans in the group proved conciliatory, but some Democrats, in a tense exchange with the president, urged military action. Senator Russell, chairman of the Armed Services Committee, and Senator Fulbright, chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, advocated an invasion of Cuba. Russell went further. He favored "knocking out" the missiles with "bombs and rockets." An annoyed Kennedy departed the meeting to get ready for his television address, muttering to Sorensen that "if they want this job, they can have it—it's no great joy to me."³⁸

The president's advisers and most scholars have explained the choice of a television speech—a surprise public statement—to inform the Soviets as necessary to the success of United States policy. From the beginning Kennedy's aides discussed the usefulness of a public ultimatum—"a statement to the world." The question was timing: Should it be delivered without prior notice to the Soviet Union and Cuba, or should it follow diplomatic approaches to the two governments? ExCom on October 17 discussed the option of a diplomatic overture. One scenario included approaches to Nikita S. Khrushchev and Castro; they would be told of American plans to force the missiles out of Cuba, and if no satisfactory reply was received within forty-eight hours, Kennedy would go on television to announce the installation of the blockade. But in the end the president and his advisers decided to surprise the Soviets with a public address. They thought that Americans had to be told early because "no responsible President would have tried to mobilize the Navy for a quarantine without telling the American people exactly what he was doing." It was believed, too, that a dramatic media speech exposing Soviet perfidy would rally world opinion to United States policy. As well, ExCom members feared that Khrushchev himself might issue a "blustering ultimatum" and delay negotiations until all the missiles became operational. In other words, the "initiative" would shift

to the Soviets.³⁹ Blockade would have been a likely response, but if Russia backed out, then if Russia broke out to force with a counter-

³⁸ "Minutes of the 507th Meeting of the National Security Council on Monday, October 22, 1962, 3:00 P.M., Cabinet Room," box 313, National Security File (Kennedy Library); Neil MacNeil, *Dirksen: Portrait of a Public Man* (New York, 1970), 205-207; Kennedy, *Thirteen Days*, 53-54; Sorensen, *Kennedy*, 702-703. Russell and William Fulbright believed that an invasion would be less likely to lead to nuclear war with the Soviet Union because it would pit American soldiers against Cubans rather than against Russians, who might stand aside. "RBR (ba) Notes," Special Presidential File, ser. 15, Oct. 1962, Richard B. Russell Papers (University of Georgia Library, Athens); *Congressional Record*, 93 Cong., 1 sess., pt. 31, vol. 119, Dec. 10, 1973, pp. 40353-40354.

³⁹ "Off-the-Record Meeting on Cuba," 6:30-7:55 P.M., Oct. 16, 1962, p. 46 (Kennedy Library); Sorensen to Paterson, Dec. 13, 1984 (in Paterson's possession); Edwin M. Martin to Paterson, Jan. 14, 1985, *ibid.*; Ball to Paterson, Dec. 17, 1984, *ibid.*; U. Alexis Johnson to Paterson, Dec. 3, 1984, *ibid.*; Roswell L. Gilpatric to Paterson, Nov. 28, 1984, *ibid.*; Dean Rusk to Paterson, March 30, 1984, *ibid.*; Allison, *Essence of Decision*, 201-202. It is difficult to understand the importance of "initiative" in this crisis. ExCom member Charles Bohlen, former ambassador to the Soviet Union, recommended on October 18 that "diplomatic action" be taken—that Kennedy communicate with Khrushchev "privately." Bohlen added, "I don't quite see the urgency of military action—if it leaks and we have already initiated diplomatic action we should be able to handle it." Bohlen, *Witness to History*, 192. Indeed, United States military superiority in the region was never doubted, and any shift in initiative would have been short-lived. Adlai Stevenson also urged negotiations before taking public action. John Bartlow Martin, *Adlai Stevenson and the World: The Life of Adlai E. Stevenson* (Garden City, 1978), 721-23.

One time when Kennedy conceivably could have issued the private warning was October 18, when the president met in the White House with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko. The journalist Walter Lippmann published a widely read column of October 25 criticizing the president for suspending diplomacy—for not showing Gromyko the photographs and informing him that the United States would soon announce a policy to force the dismantling of the missiles. If Kennedy had discussed the issue with Gromyko, "the President would have given Mr. Khrushchev what all wise statesmen give their adversaries—the chance to save face." Kennedy later rebutted that by October 18 he had not yet settled on a policy, he did not have complete information from reconnaissance, and he "did not want to give him [Gromyko] the satisfaction of announcing what he was doing." Kennedy added: "This way we held the initiative." Moreover, Gromyko's prevarication in that meeting—that the Soviets would not place offensive missiles in Cuba—convinced some Kennedy officials that private diplomacy would not work.⁴⁰ NO

Although little evidence is now available to sustain such an argument, it is plausible that the vehicle of a surprise, public television speech was selected for its anticipated domestic political impact.⁴¹ First, a dramatic speech announcing bold action would surely rally Americans around the Democratic administration. Second, a tough-minded speech would take the campaign issue away from the Republicans and possibly disarm critics who thought Kennedy pusillanimous toward Communism. Third, Kennedy might have reasoned that quiet, private negotiations could not have been conducted in secret for very long. The inevitable leaks would perpetuate charges that the administration was concealing information and underplaying the military threat. And even if the negotiations proved successful, Republicans would sneer that unsavory deals with the archenemy had been struck in secret or that opportunities for purging the Western Hemisphere of Castro and the Soviets had been squandered. Whatever the case, the speech's effect warmed Democrats, for the public response to the president's stand was positive. (BECAUSE THAT'S ALL THAT WAS REVEALED)

October 23-October 28 / DID N. JOHNSON OR IF DRUGS WHY DID IT SEEM MORE URGENT? (WHAT IF SOVS REVEALED NOW ULT, '62—AND MADE COUNTERTHREAT?)

After his televised statement Kennedy and his aides waited anxiously for the Soviet response. The quarantine was put in place. Khrushchev and Kennedy exchanged letters, and Soviet officials met secretly with Americans in Washington. On October 28 the Soviet Union agreed to withdraw the missiles, and the United States promised not to invade Cuba in the future. That promise did not spring from domestic political calculations but from a desire to end a dangerous crisis. A pledge not to invade Cuba, after all, would hardly satisfy Republicans, who could be expected to argue in the 1964 presidential campaign that Kennedy had permitted the "Red menace" to remain in the Western Hemisphere. Still, during those hair-trigger

⁴⁰ Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* (Boston, 1980), 535; *Public Papers . . . Kennedy*, 199; U. Alexis Johnson to Paterson, Dec. 3, 1984.

⁴¹ ExCom discussed the "political content" of the address. "Tentative Agenda for Off-the-Record NSC Meeting, October 21, 1962, 2:30 P.M.," box 313, National Security File (Kennedy Library).

not unequivocally demonstrate that all the missiles had been shipped back to the Soviet Union. And to gather evidence of dismantling, American surveillance planes crossed Cuba, always with the risk of being shot down, as had happened once already, on October 27. Kennedy now approved such intelligence flights on a one-by-one basis, apprehensive of an attack that would inflame Cuban-Soviet-American relations, force him to retaliate, and spark war. The political damage at home would also be great, for it would seem to confirm Republican complaints that Kennedy had not really solved the Cuban problem. In this period the administration and Democratic leaders continued efforts to build a popular consensus, worked to reassure the public that the missiles were in fact departing, and sought to counter Republican "sniping."⁴⁷ As before October 16, American politics and Cuba became conspicuously intertwined.

President Kennedy must have grimaced when he read what Eisenhower said at a campaign rally in Syracuse, New York, on October 29. The former president had not long before urged that Cuba be taken out of the campaign, but now he turned partisan. Only Republican prodding, evident in the Cuba Resolution, he argued, had enabled Kennedy to act forcefully in the crisis. The next day several right-wing Americans organized the Committee for the Monroe Doctrine. Backed by some Republican congressmen, by pundits such as William F. Buckley, Jr., and by former military officers such as Adm. Arthur W. Radford, the committee protested that Kennedy had guaranteed a "Communist colony" in violation of the Monroe Doctrine's invocation against the extension of a foreign "system" into the Western Hemisphere. Other Republicans pressed the question. For example, Goldwater joined Rep. Bob Wilson, chairman of the House Republican campaign committee, to ask the president to abrogate the agreement with the Soviet Union. The no-invasion pledge, they complained, had "locked Castro and Communism into Latin America and thrown away the key to their removal." The *Chicago Tribune*, a staunchly Republican newspaper, ran a front-page cartoon showing a Democratic donkey holding a placard lettered "Read All about Cuba." A forlorn elephant remarks: "But only a couple of weeks ago, you were begging me not to mention the Cuban issue." The cartoon was titled "Last Minute Drive for Votes."⁴⁸

Did Kennedy and the Democrats use Cuba in a drive for votes during the last week of the campaign? They did, but they were puzzled about how to go about it without appearing to be crass. The Democratic National Committee prepared drafts of some "fairly rough speeches" on Cuba for candidates, but whether they were used is not clear. Kennedy sent letters meant for publication to candidates,



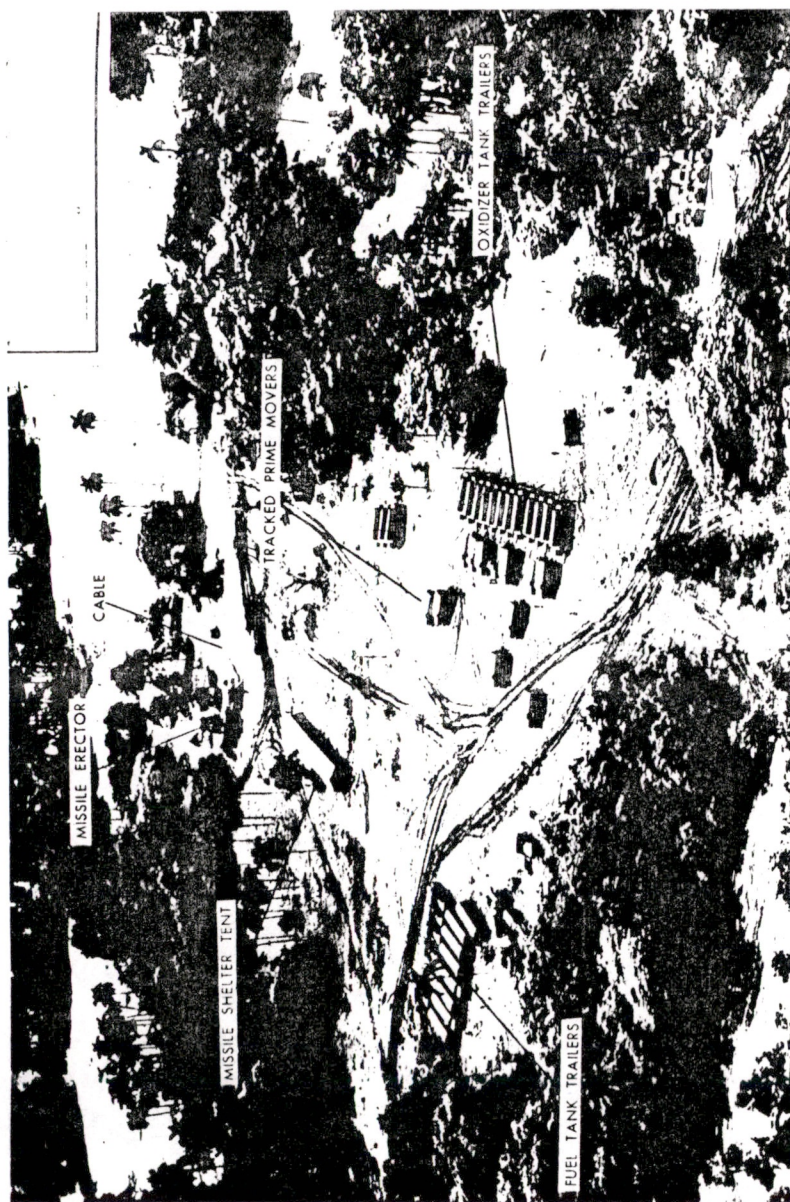
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Executive Committee Record of Action, November 6, 1962, 6:15 P.M., Meeting No. 21," box 8, Vice Presidential Security File, Johnson Papers.

⁴⁷ Samuel C. Brightman to Pierre Salinger, Oct. 31, 1962, box 47, White House Central Files (Kennedy Library).

⁴⁸ *New York Times*, Oct. 30, 1962, pp. 1, 16; *ibid.*, Oct. 31, 1962, p. 19; Edward V. Rickenbacker to Sen. Jack Miller, Dec. 10, 1962, with attachments, box 145, Young Papers; Marvin Liebman to Rickenbacker, "Committee for the Monroe Doctrine: Report #1," memorandum, Nov. 5, 1962, box 65, Liebman Associates Papers (Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Calif.); *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962, 338; Republican Congressional Committee, "Cuban Issue," 14; Press Release, Nov. 1, 1962, Cotton Papers; *Chicago Tribune*, Nov. 2, 1962, p. 1.

playing on the theme of the need for "men of strength" in "this hour of national crisis." From the beginning of the crisis, the White House had managed the news. The president restricted his advisers, telling those present at the ExCom meeting of October 30, for example, that all discussions with the press had to have his authorization. He wanted a consistent story to come out of the State and the Defense departments, and he also sought to prevent Cuban exiles from buying radio time to attack United States policy. As well, the president released aerial photo-



San Cristobal missile site shown in reconnaissance photograph of October 23, 1962, released on November 2, 1962.
Still Media Depository, United States Department of Defense, Washington, D.C.

graphs just three days before the election in order to prove the dismantling of the Soviet missile bases.⁴⁹

Kennedy's aides thought that a large voter turnout on November 6 would help the Democrats. But how could the administration induce voters to the polls without appearing to be crassly exploiting the missile crisis? Secretary of Agriculture Orville Freeman proposed that friendly commentators be encouraged to urge citizens to vote Democratic in "this hour of crisis" to demonstrate to the world national backing for the president's policy toward Cuba. A few days later Schlesinger advised the president to capitalize on the Cuban crisis by issuing a statement himself, "calling on the nation to show its gratitude for its democratic opportunities by voting in unprecedented numbers next Tuesday."⁵⁰

Advisers to the president discovered in the Advertising Council a way to arouse voter participation without their suffering the stigma of playing politics with foreign policy. Assistant to the President Timothy J. Reardon, Jr., suggested to the president of the Advertising Council, a business-funded nonprofit organization that produced advertisements deemed "in the public interest," that a heavy vote in November would indicate to the Soviets that Americans "in times of crisis" value "our free system of government." Reardon recommended a mass-media campaign. In response the council prepared several announcements and on October 29 sent them to every television and radio station in the United States. One of the sixty-second announcements read: "It is well to remind ourselves that these weeks of crisis do not mean the end of Communist threats to our security. *They will threaten us again.* . . . Let's show the Communists. Let's pile up the biggest vote in history." Two days later a similar advertisement was airmailed to 105 metropolitan daily newspapers. Pleased with the project, Press Secretary Pierre Salinger then asked the council to produce a one-minute film of former President Eisenhower's appealing for a large vote, to go along with a similar film, provided by the White House, of Kennedy's saying much the same. During the evening of November 2, the council air-expressed prints of both films to the major networks and 335 television stations; and it sent audiotapes of the messages to radio networks.⁵¹

Through that supposedly nonpartisan effort, the administration effectively linked the president's successful handling of the crisis with the elections. Yet analysts remained uncertain how the Cuban crisis would affect voters. Some speculated that

⁴⁹ "NSC Executive Committee Record of Action . . . Meeting No. 21," Johnson Papers; Kennedy to Edmund G. Brown, Oct. 31, 1962, box 47, White House Central Files (Kennedy Library); "NSC Executive Committee Record of Action, October 30, 1962, 10:00 A.M., Meeting No. 13," box 8, Vice Presidential Security File, Johnson Papers; Kern, Levering, and Levering, *Kennedy Crises*, 123-40; Press Release, Nov. 2, 1962, box 5, Schlesinger Papers; *Public Papers . . . Kennedy*, 821. Kennedy decided on November 5 not to release pictures or information gathered from aerial reconnaissance missions on November 4. "NSC Executive Record of Action, November 5, 1962, 10:00 A.M., Meeting No. 20," box 8, Vice Presidential Security File, Johnson Papers.

⁵⁰ Orville Freeman to Robert F. Kennedy, Oct. 29, 1962, box 12, Attorney General's Personal Correspondence, Robert F. Kennedy Papers (Kennedy Library); Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Memorandum for the President, Nov. 1, 1962, box 5, Schlesinger Papers.

⁵¹ The Advertising Council estimated that about 35,000 television and radio messages were aired; at least 50 newspapers published the advertisement. T. S. Repplier to Broadcaster, Oct. 29, 1962, with attachments, box 693, White House Central Files (Kennedy Library); Arthur M. Wilson to Timothy J. Reardon, Jr., Oct. 29, 1962, *ibid.*; T. J. Reardon, Jr., Memorandum for the President, Nov. 13, 1962, *ibid.*; Repplier to the President, Dec. 4, 1962, *ibid.*; Salinger to Repplier, Dec. 17, 1962, *ibid.*

out; some concluded that the crisis would help incumbents of both parties; still others wrote that the Democrats would benefit. Surely the Republican and the Democratic manipulations of the Cuban issue just before the elections aroused voter interest. November 6, 1962, marked the largest turnout of eligible voters (47 percent) in any midterm election since 1922.⁵²

Election Day, November 6: The Outcome of House and Senate Races

The elections of 1962 barely changed party alignment in the House. On the whole incumbents did well, and because most incumbents were Democrats, Democrats did well by the measurements of previous midterm elections. The Eighty-eighth Congress, elected on November 6, numbered 259 Democrats and 176 Republicans. The previous Congress was controlled by the Democrats, 263 to 174. Thus the Democrats lost only four seats, and the Republicans gained only two. Republican gains came in the South (5 seats); Democrats won 9 new seats in the West; in the Midwest the Democrats lost, but the Republicans made no gains; and in the East, both parties lost seats (see table 3).⁵³

Because so many incumbents were victorious, can the defeat of those Republican incumbents who lost be explained by Kennedy's handling of the missile crisis? Did the election results stem from voter reaction to the crisis? Domestic-policy issues, local political peculiarities, the nature of the 1960 election, the strength of the Democratic party in voter registration, reapportionment, and the ancient practice of gerrymandering—not the Cuban missile crisis—best explain the Republican party's failure to make significant gains in the House. In the nation as a whole, 206 representatives had to run in new or substantially altered districts. Reapportionment had allocated ten additional congressional districts to the West, and the Democrats won all but one of those new districts. Eight of the new districts were in California; Democrats won seven of them in large part because of a radical gerrymander.⁵⁴

In California, redistricting victimized three incumbent Republicans: John H. Rousselot, Edgar W. Hiestand, and Gordon L. McDonough. Rousselot, a first-term congressman and member of the John Birch Society, represented Richard M. Nixon's old district. After gerrymandering, this conservative Republican district was transformed, with the Democrats enjoying a 62 to 38 percent advantage in registered voters. Democratic State Assemblyman Ronald B. Cameron defeated Rousselot by earning 53.1 percent of the popular vote. Hiestand, another John Birch Society member, was a sixth-term congressman who lost to Everett G. Burkhalter of the Los Angeles City Commission. After the state legislature altered Hiestand's district, it had 37,000 more registered Democrats than Republicans. Burkhalter won with 52.1

⁵² *New York Times*, Oct. 26, Oct. 28, Oct. 30, 1962; Violet M. Gunther to Morris H. Rubin, Oct. 29, 1962, box 19, Americans for Democratic Action Papers (State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison); Matty Matthews, "1962 Senatorial Campaign Prospects," Nov. 2, 1962, box 23-G-4-2F, Senatorial Files, Humphrey Papers; *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962, 1047.

⁵³ *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962, 1034.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 1034, 1062; Victor C. Ferkliss, "Our '4-Party' System," *Nation*, Dec. 1, 1962, p. 368.

Table 3
Party Division in the 87th and 88th Congresses
(By Geographic Section)

	East		South		Midwest		West		Nation	
87th Congress	129		120		129		59		437	
88th Congress	122		119		125		69		435	
87th Congress (by party)	D	R	D	R	D	R	D	R	D	R
	68	61	111	9	51	78	33	26	263	174
88th Congress (by party)	D	R	D	R	D	R	D	R	D	R
	65	57	105	14	47	78	42	27	259	176
Net Change by Party	D	R	D	R	D	R	D	R	D	R
	-3	-4	-6	+5	-4	-	+9	+1	-4	+2

SOURCE: *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962 (Washington, 1962), 1034.

percent of the vote. McDonough, an eighteen-year House veteran, suffered as well from the gerrymandering of his district. He found himself with a new district in downtown Los Angeles, politically inhospitable for a conservative Republican. The state assembly had given his opponent, Edward R. Roybal, a liberal on the Los Angeles City City Commission, a Democratic lead of 47,000 registered voters. Roybal took 56.5 percent of the popular vote on November 6. Two other California districts were also tailored to meet the needs of the Democratic Assemblymen Charles H. Wilson and Richard T. Hanna, both of whom won House seats by comfortable margins.⁵⁵

Certainly the missile crisis affected voters in California and elsewhere in the West, but the intrusion of the crisis into the campaign season may not necessarily have helped Democrats. In the West both successful Republicans and successful Democrats had favored a strong stand against Cuba. In California's Eleventh District, for example, Democratic candidate William J. Keller lost badly to Rep. J. Arthur Younger. When he analyzed the outcome, Keller concluded that voters on the whole preferred incumbents, regardless of party. He also thought insufficient funds had hindered his campaign. But he fingered the Cuban missile crisis as a culprit in two ways. First, the briefing the administration gave to incumbents such as Younger "hurt," because it marked them as leaders. Second, the crisis caused the president to cancel his campaign visit to the Golden State. "We felt the campaign was hitting its stride until Cuba, then fell off and never recovered." On the other hand, the missile crisis may have set back Nixon's California gubernatorial candidacy. Elsewhere in the West, the Cuban crisis does not appear to have decided election results.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ *New York Times*, Sept. 2, 1962, p. 26; *Time*, Nov. 16, 1962, pp. 23-25; *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962, 1034, 1046; *Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections* (Washington, 1975), 846.

⁵⁶ Frank H. Jonas, "The 1962 Elections in the West," *Western Political Quarterly*, 16 (June 1963), 384; Totton J. Anderson and Eugene C. Lee, "The 1962 Election in California," *ibid.*, 409; Royce D. Dalmatier, Clarence F.

the Midwest, where the Democrats lost four seats and the Republicans gained none, redistricting and nonforeign-policy issues best explain electoral outcomes. Rep. Walter H. Judd of Minnesota, a prominent, conservative Republican spokesman on foreign policy and a twenty-year veteran of the House, had to seek reelection in an altered district. His district was changed to include all of Minneapolis, including the Democratic Farmer-Labor (DFL) party stronghold of North Minneapolis. On election day Judd carried his old precincts by 10,860 votes; but he lost the new precincts by 16,997 votes, and DFL candidate Donald M. Fraser defeated the incumbent.⁵⁷

In Michigan, too, the Cuban issue seems to have counted minimally. In a large election, Democrat Neil Staebler beat his Republican opponent largely on domestic issues. Kennedy's handling of the Cuban issue before and after the crisis produced mixed results, according to Staebler's postelection analysis. Before October 22 Staebler had opposed a naval blockade of Cuba, scolding his Republican rival for advocating one. Then, when Kennedy imposed a blockade, Staebler had to struggle to "minimize the damage" to his campaign. He believed that the Cuban crisis was "a very helpful emotional stimulant, arousing many more people to vote"; it meant "a net change in our favor" but not enough to have decided the election. In Michigan's Sixth District, the incumbent Republican candidate won, and domestic issues were preeminent; "the Cuban triumph" yielded very few votes for the Democrat.⁵⁸

Support for Kennedy's farm program proved lethal in 1962. In Kansas incumbents Robert Dole (Republican) and J. Floyd Breeding (Democrat) were pitted against one another in a new district. Breeding campaigned in support of the farm program; he not only lost to Dole—he also failed to carry twenty-one rural counties from his old district. In a new Illinois district, seven-term Rep. Peter F. Mack, Jr. (Democrat) was upended by Republican Paul Findley, another incumbent. Findley's active opposition to the farm bill apparently secured his victory. Overall in the nation every Republican incumbent from a farm district who sought reelection was victorious.⁵⁹

McIntosh, and Earl G. Waters, eds., *The Rumble of California Politics, 1848–1970* (New York, 1970), 347; William J. Keller to Charles Daley, Nov. 9, 1962, box 683, White House Central Files (Kennedy Library); Hal Cruzan to Charles Daley, Nov. 9, 1962, *ibid.*; Alice Franklin Bryant to Kennedy, Oct. 11, Oct. 14, 1962, box 980, *ibid.* In Washington, for example, Democratic candidate Alice Franklin Bryant lost very badly to Republican Congressman Thomas M. Pelly. Probably her image as a "peace candidate" lost her many votes. *Ibid.* In Montana, both incumbent Congressmen won—one a Democrat and the other a Republican, and Cuba was only one of many issues. In the First District, successful liberal Arnold Olsen ran on a platform of support for Kennedy's domestic legislation. In the Second District, conservative Republican James Battin targeted Kennedy's farm program. A post-election report on Battin's victory did not mention Cuba. Thomas Payne, "The 1962 Election in Montana," *Western Political Quarterly*, 16 (June 1963), 441–42; "Memorandum on Second Congressional District of Montana," n.d., box 686, White House Central Files (Kennedy Library).

⁵⁷ *Minneapolis Tribune*, Oct. 16, 1962, p. 4; *ibid.*, Oct. 28, 1962, Upper Midwest Sec., pp. 1, 5; *Congressional Quarterly Guide to U.S. Elections*, 847.

⁵⁸ Neil Staebler earned 52% of the popular vote to Alvin Bentley's 47.9%. *Congressional Quarterly Guide to U.S. Elections*, 847; Neil Staebler to John F. Kennedy, Nov. 17, 1962, box 686, White House Central File (Kennedy Library). In the Sixth District Republican Charles E. Chamberlain beat Democrat Don Hayworth. "Report on the Sixth District of Michigan Congressional Campaign," n.d., box 686, *ibid.*

⁵⁹ *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962, 1046; *Time*, Nov. 16, 1962, p. 23; "Whose Victory Was It?" *New Republic*, Nov. 17, 1962, pp. 5–6.

The Republican gain of five seats in the South might be attributed to southern opposition to Kennedy's civil rights advocacy and to the Meredith episode in Mississippi. Votes for Republican candidates surpassed previous levels throughout the region. Reapportionment may also explain the results. Seven southern states suffered an attrition of eight seats in the national redistribution, and all those seats were Democratic; but Florida gained four seats, Maryland one, and Texas one. Republicans won three of the six new seats. They also gained one seat each in West Virginia and North Carolina, where reapportionment matched incumbents in redrawn districts. In both cases Democratic-controlled gerrymanders backfired.⁶⁰ Finally, in the East, as elsewhere, the Cuban crisis was but one of several influences on voters choosing members of the House.

As for the Senate races, five incumbent senators were defeated in 1962—three Republicans and two Democrats. Republicans Capehart of Indiana and Alexander Wiley of Wisconsin lost for reasons not directly related to the Cuban issue. If anything, the missile crisis may have helped both to better showings. The defeat of the third Republican, Joe H. Bottum of South Dakota, was due to a combination of factors, only one of which was the Soviet-American confrontation over Cuba. The incumbent Democrat who lost in Wyoming—J. J. Hickey—was victimized by his own hand. He was actually an interim senator who had resigned the governorship to be appointed to the national position. The public resented his self-serving tactic. A heart attack, moreover, trimmed Hickey's campaign schedule. His opponent, former Gov. Milward L. Simpson, was a popular figure who campaigned on a states' rights, anti-Communist, be-tough-with-Cuba platform that also included rejection of Medicare. Personalities rather than issues probably decided the election.⁶¹ The other incumbent Democrat to lose was Sen. John A. Carroll of Colorado. The Republicans swept the state in 1962, pushing Rep. Peter H. Dominick past Carroll. Although Dominick had hammered Carroll for not having earlier taken a hard stand against the Soviet military buildup in Cuba and although Carroll had tagged his opponent a "junior warhawk," public dissatisfaction with long-term Democratic control of state politics and perhaps anti-Catholic bias decided the election.⁶²

A closer look at the losses of the Republican incumbents reveals that while Cuba was an issue other issues counted as much or more. Bottum's loss in South Dakota owed a great deal to state politics. When Republican Sen. Francis Case died in June 1962, the governor turned the choice of a successor over to the central committee of the Republican party. Many candidates vied for the position, and after a rancorous meeting lasting ten hours, Bottum won the interim seat and was duly appointed. The Republican party was rife with squabbling factions, and Bottum, who had a reputation as a "hatchet man" for his party, proved a weak and vulnerable candidate.

⁶⁰ *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962, 1031–1034, 1062.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 1038; Charles Beall, "The 1962 Election in Wyoming," *Western Political Quarterly*, 16 (June 1963), 478; *New York Times*, Oct. 30, 1962, p. 13; Sen. Maurine B. Neuberger of Oregon campaigned for J. J. Hickey but knew he was "unsalvageable." Maurine B. Neuberger to Wayne Morse, Nov. 20, 1962, box 120, ser. B, Wayne Morse Papers (University of Oregon Library, Eugene).

⁶² Democrats had held the governorship since 1954, and John A. Carroll's wife was Catholic. The religious issue had also been apparent in Colorado in 1960. *Denver Post*, Nov. 5, 1962, p. 3; Curtis Martin, "The 1962 Election in Colorado," *Western Political Quarterly*, 16 (June 1963), 421–25; Jonas, "The 1962 Elections in the West," 377.

Further complicating Bottum's chances was an allegation that he and his wife were alcoholics—a charge Bottum seemed to substantiate through a tear-filled public denial. George McGovern also ran an effective campaign, which included a Charles Guggenheim film, *The Dakota Story*. This masterful piece of propaganda depicted McGovern as courageous (World War II battle scenes), God-fearing (old family church footage), educated (student and professor), and patriotic (Food for Peace director who combatted Communism). With a substantial lead at the beginning, Bottum slipped in the polls before the Cuban missile crisis. By election day McGovern had taken the lead, helped in part by Kennedy's handling of the crisis. "His people," Schlesinger reported to the president before the election, "feel that Cuba has played a big role in this shift."⁶³

The most conspicuous incumbent to lose in 1962 was Republican Senator Capehart. He, more than anyone else seeking reelection, had spoken to the Cuban issue. The president campaigned in the Hoosier State for the Democratic candidate Birch E. Bayh, Jr., a state representative. The White House also asked Louis Harris to conduct an intensive survey of Indiana voters. Harris discovered that Capehart's lead over Bayh was modest in the early stages of the campaign, despite the fact that Capehart was a three-term incumbent with name recognition. Harris learned too that Capehart evoked little enthusiasm among the electorate. Many voters found Capehart weak and indecisive, "a wind-bag, and playing politics too much." Capehart, moreover, had a negative rating on taxes, Medicare, unemployment, and inflation. Some complained about the senator's "intemperate views on going to war with Cuba," but in the Harris poll only 1 percent of his constituents saw Cuba as the paramount issue of the campaign even though Capehart tried to make it such. Bayh won just 50.3 percent of the vote. It does not appear that voters turned Capehart out because of his stand on Cuba or because of the president's stewardship of the crisis, but because Capehart failed to establish a positive image on the issues and as a personality against a young, energetic candidate who ran a high-exposure campaign. The Cuban missile crisis may have actually helped Capehart because it permitted him to use the "I was right all along" refrain.⁶⁴

Age, asperity, and the issue of Medicare best explain the defeat of the dean of Republican senators, Wiley of Wisconsin. Wiley was seventy-eight years old and seeking a fifth term. His Democratic challenger, Gov. Gaylord A. Nelson, who was forty-six, made age an issue. Throughout the campaign Wiley displayed a grumpy explosiveness and carelessness. Medicare and drug control, he said, were "pipsqueak issues." In early October a reporter asked him whether he had changed his opposition to Medicare. The senator shot back: "Keep your damn nose out of my business

and I'll keep my nose out of yours." When the reporter rose later to ask another question, Wiley boomed: "Keep your mouth shut." About two weeks later Wiley told reporters before a press conference that he wanted questions "without any nigger in the woodpile," and he shouted down still another reporter. Wiley apologized, but his style antagonized many. The *Burlington Standard Press*, a conservative Republican newspaper, abandoned Wiley and endorsed Nelson.⁶⁵ Without doubt Nelson's greatest asset was his opponent.

Before the missile crisis Nelson believed he had Wiley "on the run," in part because Congress had recessed and Wiley had come home to display his offensive style. But then the Cuban missile crisis intruded. Nelson feared it set back his campaign. First, the president canceled a scheduled trip to Wisconsin. Second, as Nelson noted at the time, "it has removed Wiley from the state just when his true character was becoming apparent to the voters." And, third, because Wiley was called to Washington to meet with Kennedy on October 22, the crisis "portrayed him as one of sixteen Congressional leaders upon whom the President counts." One of Nelson's close associates remarked: "This [Cuba] was no break for us." Nelson quickly applauded the quarantine and tried to contrast the president's (and Nelson's) "statesmanship" with Wiley's "slogans without meaning." But Wiley claimed headlines, making much of his supposed importance during the crisis. One press release read: "Re-called to Washington by the President for consultation on the Cuban situation, Senator Wiley also has been conferring with top defense and intelligence officials." The Cuban missile crisis may have reinvigorated Wiley's campaign, but Democrat Nelson won nonetheless with 52.6 percent of the vote.⁶⁶ The president's handling of the crisis, then, actually boosted a Republican—just as Kennedy had feared might happen.

In other senatorial contests the influence of the Cuban issue varied. In New Hampshire a fractured Republican party permitted Thomas J. McIntyre to become his state's first Democratic senator since 1932. In Idaho the two incumbents, Democrat Frank Church and Republican Leonard B. Jordan won. Jordan beat Rep. Gracie Pfoest even though her record on foreign and domestic issues was similar to Church's. The Cuban issue was not decisive in the results. In Utah it was only one of several issues, but Republican incumbent Wallace F. Bennett, who had urged a blockade and war against Cuba before the missile crisis, exploited his initiative on the Cuban issue, and it may have helped him. In South Carolina local Democrats believed that the missile crisis augmented Sen. Olin D. Johnston's vote count by diverting attention from the Mississippi controversy. As Johnston told the president by telephone in the midst of the missile crisis, "Your stand . . . meant a lot to our party down

⁶³ Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "Good News from South Dakota," Memorandum for the President, Nov. 2, 1962, box 652, Staff Memoranda—Schlesinger, President's Office File (Kennedy Library); Robert S. Anson, *McGovern: A Biography* (New York, 1972), 121–26; George S. McGovern, *Grassroots* (New York, 1977), 89–91; *Minneapolis Tribune*, Oct. 25, 1962, p. 5.

⁶⁴ Louis Harris and Associates, Inc., "The Race for United States Senator—Indiana," n.d., box 105, Subject, President's Office File (Kennedy Library); Schlesinger, *Thousand Days*, 18; *New York Times*, Sept. 1, 1962, p. 18; *ibid.*, Oct. 14, 1962, pp. 1, 43; *ibid.*, Oct. 29, 1962, p. 20; *Time*, Nov. 16, 1962, p. 26; *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 4, 1962, sec. G, p. 2.

⁶⁵ *Milwaukee Journal*, Oct. 16, Oct. 9, Oct. 21, 1962; *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 28, 1962, pt. 1, p. 6. For criticisms of Alexander Wiley, see also *Sheboygan Press*, Oct. 16, 1962; and *Janesville [Wisconsin] Daily Gazette*, Oct. 11, 1962.

⁶⁶ Gaylord A. Nelson to Humphrey, Oct. 23, 1962, box 691, White House Central Files (Kennedy Library); *LaCrosse Tribune*, Oct. 28, 1962; campaign tape recording, 1962, box 208, Gaylord A. Nelson Papers (State Historical Society of Wisconsin); Press Release, Oct. 27, 1962, box 18, Alexander I. Wiley Papers, *ibid.* For the Nelson-Wiley contest, see also *Milwaukee Tribune*, Oct. 26, Oct. 28, 1962; *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 28, 1962, pt. 1, p. 6; *Milwaukee Journal*, Oct. 28, 1962; *Time*, Nov. 16, 1962, p. 26; and *Minneapolis Tribune*, Oct. 28, 1962, p. 4B.

there—brought the people together.” Johnston’s drawing of 57.2 percent of the vote, however, suggests that he had the election well in hand before the Cuban crisis. Finally, to cite another senatorial contest, incumbent Republican Dirksen, Senate minority leader, defeated Democratic Rep. Sidney R. Yates in Illinois. Dirksen was one of the leaders the president had called to Washington. But by then the senator’s reelection seemed certain, and Kennedy had given only lukewarm support to Yates. The state’s other senator, Democrat Paul H. Douglas, concluded that Dirksen and Kennedy had essentially struck a bargain wherein the president would not work to unseat the senator. At one point during the missile crisis, Kennedy had remarked personally to Dirksen that he did not need to campaign. “You’re just as good as in.” The press had picked up this bit of news, speculating that Kennedy had written off a member of his own party.⁶⁷

A familiar theory holds that voters tend not to favor newcomers in times of crisis. To the extent that this is true, the Cuban missile crisis benefited Senate and House incumbents—and 1962 was a good year for incumbents. As Republican Rep. Thomas B. Curtis of Missouri later explained, the missile showdown “gave all the incumbents running for reelection a great build-up. We were important. . . . This is what saved the Democrat controlled Congress, the great plus given to incumbents. Of course, Republican incumbents got the same benefit, but we were in the minority and we stayed in the minority.”⁶⁸ But the proposition that voters prefer not to change leaders in moments of crisis does not adequately explain the complexity of the 1962 election. Many of the losers of both parties were Washington veterans (Judd, Capehart, Wiley, Yates, Pfoz, Rousselot, Hiestand, McDonough, and Carroll, among others). And some of the winners were newcomers to national office (Bayh, McIntyre, Nelson, and Simpson, among others). In some cases, moreover, such as in North Carolina and Kansas, congressional reapportionment had paired incumbents against one another in new districts, ensuring the defeat of some.

The effects of the Cuban missile crisis seem indiscriminate. The crisis helped some Democrats and hurt some Democrats; it buoyed some Republicans and weakened some Republicans. In many instances Cuba was not even a conspicuous campaign issue. The historian cannot identify one election in 1962 decided by voter reaction to the missile crisis—not a single outcome where the Cuban issue made the difference between victory and defeat. The results of the House and the Senate races, in other words, are best explained by the mix of other factors discussed in this article: personalities and their public images; local politics; domestic issues; reapportionment and gerrymandering; superior Democratic party registration; and the nature of the 1960 election.

Kennedy did not engage Cuba and the Soviet Union in the missile crisis in Oc-

tober in order to silence his noisy Republican critics or to attract votes for Democrats in November. As Kennedy knew before October 16, the Democrats already enjoyed a formidable position in the elections. Republicans had taken the initiative on Cuba through their constant scolding of the administration, but they had not persuaded voters to dump Democrats. The Democrats had no political need to manufacture a war scare, and Kennedy did not welcome a new Cuban crisis. From October 16 to October 22, Kennedy’s choice of the quarantine was not dictated by politics, although the tactic of the television address may have been. From the alarmist speech to the fading of the crisis on October 28, Kennedy ruminated about the political effects of the imbroglio, but, again, his decisions did not reflect a partisan stance; he did not, for example, shift from the potentially unworkable and slow-paced quarantine to immediate and decisive military action. From October 28, when Khrushchev capitulated to Kennedy’s ultimatum, to the election on November 6, both Republicans and Democrats exploited Cuba for political advantage. Neither party, it seems, particularly profited from the Cuban missile crisis on election day. The politics of the Cuban issue in the fall of 1962 was spirited and acrimonious but had limited impact on either the president’s momentous decisions after the secret debate in Washington or the voter’s decisions after entering polling places in every district in the United States.

As for what did shape President Kennedy’s decisions in the Cuban missile crisis, scholars will find the answers, as they have already begun to do, in the study of his personality traits, calculations of national security and hemispheric hegemony, and perceptions of international power, prestige, and credibility.

⁶⁷ *Congressional Quarterly Almanac*, 1962, 1032; William O. Lewis, “The 1962 Election in Idaho,” *Western Political Quarterly*, 16 (June 1963), 433–34; Stewart L. Grow, “The 1962 Election in Utah,” *ibid.*, 465; Robert L. Stoddard to Kennedy, Nov. 13, 1962, box 47, White House Central Files (Kennedy Library); Olin D. Johnston telephone call to Kennedy, memorandum, Oct. 26, 1962, box 155, President’s Office File (Kennedy Library); Paul H. Douglas, *In the Fullness of Time: The Memoirs of Paul H. Douglas* (New York, 1972), 573–75; MacNeil, *Dirksen*, 205–206.

⁶⁸ Thomas B. Curtis to Paterson, Feb. 13, 1984 (in Paterson’s possession).